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The Orchestra in the Grade Schools*

By Bessie M. Whiteley, Kansas City, Missouri.

A *questionnaire* recently sent out by me to educators in twenty-six of our largest cities, referring to the establishment of orchestral practice in their elementary schools, brought forth the following information—twenty-three having replied:

1. To the query, "Is orchestra practice established in your Elementary Schools?", eight answered in the negative, but in most cases with the assertion, "We hope soon to have it established". Four answered, "Just starting it", Boston, Mass., being one of these four thus replying. Eleven, answering as to the length of time such has been established, state variously from two to twenty years—the city of Philadelphia having had such practice "outside of school hours" for fifteen years, and Cincinnati (in a few of its schools) for twenty years.

2. To the query, "In what per cent of your schools is orchestra practice established?", the answers vary from eight to one hundred per cent.

3. To the query, "Does a special supervisor attend to this work?", the answers, in most cases, state that the regular supervisor and assistants, with the help of principals and gifted grade teachers, are conducting the work. In the St. Louis schools there is, in the supervisory department, a specially qualified orchestra man to whom this work will be entrusted later on. In the St. Paul schools, children who have

studied the violin or some other orchestral instrument and who desire to enter the orchestra may join a class for such practice (after school hours), conducted by a professional violinist of the city.

4. To the query, "Do you employ an instructor to teach band or orchestral instruments?" the answers state generally, "Not solely for that purpose." Dr. Rix, of New York City, answers, "We are starting a great movement for violin instruction, and may include other instruments". In the schools of that city, there are over fifteen hundred children in the orchestras.

In the Cincinnati schools, an outside teacher—a professional teacher of music—is allowed to organize classes of instruction to children outside of school hours, charging not more than \$2.50 for a lesson—making the expense, which is borne by the individual pupil, ten cents for each, in a class lesson to twenty-five. The Board does not defray this expense.

In the city of Oakland, Cal., where an orchestra or a band is established in nearly every school, the city employs ten instructors for these schools.

Boston, Mass., also employs such special teachers.

5. To a question in regard to what effect orchestra practice has upon the school "spirit", and in regard to the popularity of the movement with school patrons and musicians of the community, the answers state unan-
imously "good effect", "received with

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interest and enthusiasm", "popular with patrons and the musicians", etc., etc.

To the query, "What is the most encouraging feature of the work?", the answers are most valuable and encouraging. Here are a few of them:—

- (a) "Its social feature."
- (b) "Giving encouragement to young soloists."
- (c) "The love which it creates for music in the community."
- (d) "Aroused interest of all the pupils of the school, hundreds of applications for instruction being received."
- (e) "It gives the pupils—especially the boys—the right kind of emotional reaction at the right age."
- (f) "The general interest in music aroused, especially among the larger boys."
- (g) "Subsequent musical activity—especially orchestral work—after leaving school."
- (h) "It develops the positively musical, and induces the negatively musical to attempt more than they otherwise would."
- (i) "It is wonderful, the number of boys and girls who are beginning lessons on some instrument, just that they may join the school orchestra. I could tell of many boys who have been kept in school, or whose attendance has been made regular on this account."

In Los Angeles there are nearly eight hundred children in orchestras. The Board allows an amount of money each month towards the expense of the music material used by the orchestras.

This work has proven of such value in the Cincinnati schools that the Board of Education has recently invested \$1000 in buying orchestral instruments for children unable to purchase what was needed for their use.

As to the movement in the Kansas City (Mo.) schools, there was quite a spontaneous activity last year, ten orchestras being established in as many grade schools, their personnel varying from five to twenty members.

These were under the sole direction of gifted grade teachers. This season we have nearly forty of such organizations—also mostly spontaneous in origin—and enthusiasm seems to be on the increase. One of our last year's school orchestras continued its practice through the summer vacation, attracting adult members—both men and women—and increasing its membership to about thirty regularly attending. These rehearsals were had during the evenings, and were under the auspices of the Play Ground Management, the regular former school-orchestra director of that district being retained. So much enthusiasm and genuine interest were developed that this fall an appeal was made to our Board of Education, by the adult members, for the establishment of orchestral practice in connection with our Night Schools. This petition was granted; and we now have nearly one hundred men, women and children belonging and regularly practicing in the several classes organized.

There are many interesting experiences incidental to this work in our schools; and phases of human nature are brought to the surface, disclosing such sympathetic and lovable strains in the character of children as wise educators must suspect lie soundless under ordinary circumstances. The garrets at home are ransacked, with the result that solo musical instruments of every conceivable description—that have for years lain in hiding, and soulless—are brought forth and to school by childish hands, and the irresistible appeal made that the owner be allowed to use these in "our orchestra". The Boy Scout brings his battered bugle or drum; the eight year

old brother his baritone horn bigger than himself; the older brother, an ante-Boehm flute; his sisters, various antiquated styles of banjos and guitars; and so on *ad infinitum*. A host of anxious, appealing, loving, would-be musicians are clamoring all about us for help, and to be taught how to express their purest of emo-

tions, together with their companions, in a little glorified group called "our orchestra".

Knowing what this means to these under our charge—both now and afterwards—we must not refuse. It is very plain that we must make ready to serve well this need in our schools.

The High School Chorus

By T. P. Giddings, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The principal thing in high school music is, or should be, the chorus. It should be the best and most useful part of the whole music system but it is to be feared that it seldom fulfills its proper function.

The chorus is the instrument by which music is taught to every one in the school. To be effective the chorus should be a large one and every pupil in the school should be in it. There should never be anything elective about the high school chorus. There may be a number in the school who think they cannot or do not want to sing. These should all be in the chorus. They will learn something by being in the chorus and doing what they can. They will get much by simply hearing the fine things the chorus is singing and also from the lessons in appreciation that should be given to the whole chorus at frequent intervals.

There is another lesson to be learned in the chorus even greater than the music. It is the lesson of co-operation. In his other studies what the pupil will get out of it himself is the incentive. All his other education tends to make him selfish. Seldom is the pupil taught the great lesson of helping someone else. More

seldom still is he taught to labor for the common good. In the chorus this can be brought out in a very practical way. Each must do his share so that all members may get the benefit of the chorus, so that the chorus may benefit the school and community. In all this the pupil labors for the good of all and this fact should be kept constantly before him. The world needs people trained to ask "What can I do for the Community" and not "What do I get out of it?" Our schools must be changed to fit this need.

If the above does not convince that the compulsory way is the best let me relate two experiences that befell me some months ago.

Last year I had the privilege of being present at a rehearsal of Verdi's Requiem by the high school of one of Boston's suburbs. There were 650 pupils in the chorus. Whether it was the whole school or not I do not remember but I do remember being told that music was compulsory in the high school and that every pupil in the school had learned the selection. This school learned and gave one of the big choral works each year. They gave it in Boston with soloists and orchestra. The leader